

LIVELIHOOD IN SILWA

are almost hereditary, learnt by son from father or uncle. Parents who have land afford their children no other opportunity but of working on it, and they endeavour to keep them on the farm. 463 198

Ali maintained that 'agriculture is the best occupation and the most dignified of all, an occupation which is worth while following. Apart from aliens, there is no man who is not a farmer, and no woman who is not a housekeeper and a cook. A man cooking or sewing or a woman ploughing or irrigating the land is something unheard of in our village. Indeed, one of the reasons for marriage is the fact that some of the tasks are performed only by a woman, and there must be a woman to do them as there always has been. Very few of our women have travelled by train, and if so, chiefly to visit relatives in town or shrines of saints, while a much greater number of men go to town on private or official visits.' This statement shows clearly the rigid sex-distribution in occupation. Furthermore, farming, especially one's own land, is the most esteemed occupation for men, and it is only necessity that forces others to be engaged in any other occupation.¹ This attitude of mind renders the possibility of establishing an industry or craft in the village very difficult. The prestige attached to the possession of land is very great. A wealthy merchant is not socially on par with a farm-owner. Farm-earnings are the most meritorious of all earnings; in other words, they are the surest of all 'halal' earnings—legitimately deserved and thus divinely approved. In farming, one is grappling directly with nature and getting the produce out of the soil's depths, depending on or contacting no other human beings, whom one might oppress or be oppressed by. One has only to sow the seeds and attend to them and God will look after the rest. The same attitude of 'halal' earnings applies to fishing, breeding cows or raising sheep, where the results solely depend on one's treatment and dealing with the object to be attended to. Thus, according to Ali, 'the evils of man are avoided'. This is certainly a fabricated religious justification or rationalization of the most secure source of livelihood in this rural society. The statement of my informant shows, however, the psychological anxiety that is bound up with economic insecurity, especially in ventures that entail any dealing with people or involving human contacts. 463 462 461 581 484 463 554 156 156

It is also significant that to acquire land through inheritance as distinguished from buying it, is to be stamped with the hallmark of prestige and prosperity. To be called 'heir to land' means good origin and good status in the village. 554 428

The reasons for the social importance of land and the emotional attachment to it are not difficult to seek. Economically speaking, land for generations has been the tangible bulwark against starvation and insecurity; it never fails to give reward for its cultivation, and thus it is a permanent property 'better than gold'. This analogy is derived from a well-known folk-tale about a father who had two sons, bequeathing to the favourite 554 428

¹ There appears to be no supporting evidence for this esteem either in folklore or in proverbs. There is nothing in the text of the Koran to that effect.

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older sibling, he is expected to do so, and take his turn. So practically every grown-up member of the family goes through almost the same farming stages and hence there is no specialization in any particular farm task. Friction sometimes occurs between brothers, because of gaps in this process of training, as in the case of a brother who has been working in town at an early age returning to the village to work with his family. He would resent, for instance, fetching the fertilizer from the hill, while his older brother might expect him to take over this task. In the same way, boys who had been sent by their fathers to the Kuttah to memorize the Koran till the age of fourteen or fifteen would find it difficult to adapt themselves to the cycles of agricultural work. In a few cases the performing of the appropriate tasks according to age and ability has led fathers to give each of their married sons a separate piece of land to cultivate for himself, as if they were leasing the land, the father getting one-third of the crop.

In spite of the fact that between the ages of five and twelve there is a certain amount of overlapping in the tasks of both boys and girls in the home, yet the sexual dichotomy in work is definitely established about the age of twelve. Even at an earlier stage, when the girl takes the food to the field or takes a basketful of grass to the sheep, she is only allowed to remain at the edge of it by the canal. If she ever entertains the idea of touching the implements or playing with the water, her father or brothers immediately shout at her 'Leave it! Get off the land or away from the water!' After the age of thirteen, the girls' errands are confined to the neighbourhood and they work more inside the dwelling. They are encouraged to go out for water-fetching only after sunset, when all men have returned home from work. The agricultural road leading from the village to the Nile is monopolized at night, specially on moonlit nights, by adolescent girls and women going to the Nile to fill their water-jars.

In discussing the productive activities in the village, the incentives for work must be mentioned. It is hardly necessary to stress the fact that the drive for food, and for sufficient supply of it, is one of the basic motives for work. With the small landholdings there is hardly any other alternative but to grow crops which yield the major substance of their food consumption, bread, whether wheat, barley or millet, constituting the bulk of food intake in any meal. It is believed that bread made out of home-grown crops is more lasting and sufficing than that made out of seeds bought at the market, as there is more 'baraka'—holiness and sufficiency—in the former kind. Even those few farmers with comparatively large-sized farms who have recently taken up the cultivation of cash crops like cotton and sugar-cane, still reserve the major part of their land for corn. Security of food supply depends on growing seeds as the only way of subsistence. 'From where are you going to eat?' is a question invariably asked by the villagers of any of them who entertains the idea of growing cotton on his small farm.

As it is, the various crops have different security and prestige values

THE SOCIAL ORGANIZATION OF THE COMMUNITY

834 tions, and an old woman can pass by a group of men without covering her face, and can salute them, or talk to them on passing, but even then she cannot sit with men outside the house.

INTER-FAMILY RELATIONS

593 It is appropriate here to discuss the stylized norms of relationship and behaviour that should obtain between the various members of the family as an index to the understanding of the social structure and its functioning.

The husband-wife pattern is one where the husband is the superior partner and enjoys the highest position in the family. He is, as the saying goes, 'the supporting pillar and the vantage of the house', who is expected to make all the important decisions. The wife should tell her husband of the major events in the household, though he should not by convention betray any eagerness in enquiring about them. The husband is socially responsible for the acts and undertakings of his wife, immediately she moves from her matrilocal residence. He usually plans the work of his sons, while the wife does the same with the daughters; but he is not expected to interfere with his wife's domestic work. On the other hand, the wife is supposed to be submissive, devoted, and respectful to her husband. Sexual fidelity is the hallmark of sustained marriage relationship, as infidelity entails at least divorce, if not attempting to kill the wife and the paramour. As a wife, she should also attend to her husband, offering the best food to him rather than to the children or herself; the reason being that she can always have children but she cannot afford to have a substitute for her supporter (sanad). She should open the door for her husband when he knocks, pour out the water when he washes his hands after the meal, and give him priority in every respect.

Although the wife seems subordinate in this pattern of relationship, she is almost the absolute manager of the house. She is the treasurer of the crops, money, legal documents, and the holder of the keys to the various chests in the house. If the man is expected to be generous and showy, the wife is expected to be frugal and industrious. The saying is that 'the man is like an overflowing sea, while the woman is like a dyke, checking his undue extravagance'. It is also conceded that the building up of a man is due to his wife, but so is his downfall, which would be regarded as the result of his wife's domestic policy.

In spite of the fact that married women do not work in the field in Silwa and in most parts of Aswan Province, the wife certainly monopolizes certain economic pursuits which are considered to be purely her domain. She raises chickens, geese, ducks, goats and sheep, and men recognize this as a purely female occupation. This is in contrast to the raising of cows, camels and donkeys by men. My informant, Mahmoud, told me: 'Women look after the "small change" while men look after the pounds.' The wife raises poultry and tends to small change as these are directly concerned

CHILDREN'S TALES, THEIR TEXTS, ANALYSIS AND SIGNIFICANCE

adjustment of the individual in his society, revealing life goals, desires, fears, tensions of living in this environment. 852x
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In the stories in question one may discern the following three basic trends permeating them, or a combination of two or three of them in the same story. The first trend is the constant recurrence of themes of food, especially meat. If children tend to repeat mechanically the text of the tale, they certainly give wide and vivid scope to their imagination when the theme of food crops up during narration. The exclamation of 'Ya salam' is always ready to be uttered when a boy dwells expressively on a food theme in a story and thus gives other children some gratification for their fantasies about food.¹ In the tales, however, reference to situations where food is eaten, given, enjoyed, hidden, or some risk undertaken in obtaining it, is abundant. This could be correlated with other cultural data such as 'the sanctity of food', the belief that somebody might 'breathe on bread or food' and thus render it dangerous to eat, and hence the custom of covering bread on a tray of food from the eyes of a stranger, or inviting him to 'have a bite' if he comes unexpectedly.² One is justified in calling these themes expressions of a 'food anxiety' according to Kardiner. It is only possible for the writer here to suggest the relationship between this 'food anxiety' and some social forces, such as the low level of subsistence economy in the village, the precarious conditions of agricultural techniques in which hard work does not always reap its adequate rewards, being threatened before the introduction of perennial irrigation by Nile flooding and occasionally by torrents and uncontrollable plant pests. Consequent on all this is the fellah's rationalization of fate, with regard to life's adversities.

Secondly, in some of the stories one glimpses reflections of the nature of the Oedipus myth: in story VIII, where the child kills his stepmother (symbolizing the bad mother in the dual mother role) and then his father; in story XIII where children are drowned in the well by their father, and the one like the 'bob tail' who managed to emerge into life again and achieve union with the mother; in story XVII, where Jiha takes his revenge by killing the father of the thieves with his 'bull's tail' and gains access to the wealth of the cave (mother). In some stories there is emphasis on masculinity, e.g. in story III where the only billy-goat that survives the ordeal of the wolf (the devouring father) is the one which is aware of its masculine capacity represented by its horns, enabling it to stand up to the father. Like the symbolism in the children's games, their tales also express certain anxieties of the castration type, especially in those stories of Jiha, who is deprived of his bull, of his money and of his blanket (XV, XVI, XVII).

¹ This was quite obvious during some of the 'children's hour' I used to hold.

² Making food covers (waleel, pl. willat) out of palm-tree leaves is a flourishing female occupation, and practically every girl starts learning how to make them before she gets married. See also Chapter IV for the villagers' secretiveness concerning food. [462]

THE FELLÄHIN OF UPPER EGYPT

152 I fancy that there was really no just cause for the woman's
593 jealous suspicions. However, she has reduced her husband to a state of abject fear lest he may arouse her anger—though I did hear that on one occasion he had plucked up sufficient courage to exercise his 'rights' as a husband, and so had administered a whipping for some fault she had committed!

462 With regard to the division of labour among the sexes, the men
241 certainly have the hardest and largest share, the most strenuous work in the fields being invariably done by them. The women and girls join their menfolk in the cultivation after the sun has risen, but their work is usually confined to the gathering of dry roots, tending the cattle, fetching the water for the household (Fig. 16), and so on. Of course, living is simple among the peasants, so that very strenuous work for the women is not necessary. Much, however, that might be done by them is neglected simply because they are without training in domestic duties and do not realize what important work lies to their hands.

462 It is, of course, very difficult for the peasants to be as clean as
515 they should be. All the water has to be fetched by the women, often from some distance. No water is laid on in the villages, no bathrooms exist, and the houses lack the most ordinary domestic offices. Excuses must, therefore, be made for the Egyptian women, who have had none of the advantages of the poorest woman in England. The instinct of the Egyptian *fellāhin*, however, is to be clean, and the religion of Islām commands ablutions. A man will almost instinctively strip and bathe if he happens to be near a canal or the river, but this privilege is denied to the women, as modesty forbids their bathing in public.

854 One of the most crying needs in Egypt is that both girls and
562 women should have instruction in the care and upbringing of children. The children undergo a great deal of unnecessary suffering during the early years of their infancy; not because their mothers are lacking in affection, for Egyptian women are, as a rule, devoted mothers, but because they are so hopelessly ignorant.

1164 The results of such ignorance more often than not leave an indelible mark on the child, such as defective eyesight or even absolute blindness. To prevent or cure disease in their children the women will go to one magician after another and purchase from them amulets and written charms, not grudging for a moment the expenditure of what may be to them considerable sums of money.

40 [Text continues on page 42]

2: Blackman E-5 (1920-1926) 1927
MR13 Fellahin MR13
Upper Egypt



FIG. 16. WOMEN CARRYING WATER-POTS ON THEIR HEADS

[page 41]

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PERSONAL DECORATION AND ORNAMENTS

being treated in this manner, and it seemed to be a somewhat painful process. However, "*Il faut souffrir pour être belle*," and these women do endure considerable discomfort in the course of their toilet.

The toffee-like substance described above is also used by women in a similar way in order to pull out any hairs that may be growing on their legs.

Most women and girls paint round the eyes with antimony (Arabic, *kohl*). It is kept in a small bottle, generally of glass, called *mikhaleh*, and is applied with a short stick with a blunt point. It is regarded not only as a beautifier, but also as a cure for sore eyes.

Scent is used by both sexes, some of it being of a very pungent nature. In some parts of Egypt it is taboo for a man to use scent while his wife is suckling her child. If he disobeys this rule the child, it is said, will come out all over in spots. A man whom I knew well used some scent on one occasion while his wife was still suckling their youngest-born. The child got nasty spots all over its body, and the mother told me that it was her husband's fault, because he had been putting some scent on his moustache!

I have sometimes heard English people remark on the dirty habit that the Egyptian peasant women have of wearing long dresses which trail over the ground, brushing up the dust in clouds as they go along. It is, of course, a very insanitary practice, but the wearing of short skirts would be looked upon as most immodest. A woman's legs should never be exposed, except from dire necessity. There is also another reason for the trailing skirts. Most peasant women walk barefooted, and so leave clearly defined footprints in the dry, dusty soil. A woman can be injured magically through her footprints, and so the long skirt acts as a safeguard, brushing over and thus obliterating them.

Little girls wear very bright-coloured cotton frocks, which reach almost to the ground (see Fig. 17). The women and older girls may wear such frocks indoors, but when they walk abroad, either to shop, to fill their water-jars, or to visit their friends, they wear a long black dress over the coloured one, and a thick veil, shawl-shaped, over their heads.

I was told by a friend some few years ago that in Sharkiyeh Province the women wear long white veils, on which are several gold or silver ornaments. These ornaments are in the form of

CHAPTER IX

INDUSTRIES. THE VILLAGE MARKET

ONE of the commonest industries in Egypt is pottery-making, ³²³ and the methods employed are usually very simple. There are, roughly speaking, two kinds of pottery—hand-made and wheel-turned. When no wheel is employed the potters may be men or women, but the wheel is used only by men. I shall deal with this industry at some length, for, despite their importance for archaeology, the methods employed by potters in modern Egypt have hitherto received little attention from archaeologists. Several of these, however, have recently told me that my researches in this subject will form a valuable addition to the study of ceramic art, and will throw light on the different methods of pottery-making employed in much earlier times, not only in Egypt itself, but in other parts of the Mediterranean area also.

The processes in the manufacture of pots vary in different parts of Egypt, and I will endeavour to give as detailed a description as possible of those which I have studied in Fayūm, Minia, Asyūt, and Kēna Provinces.

In one village in Asyūt Province there is a large pottery-making establishment in which both men and women are employed, and where hand-made as well as wheel-turned pots are manufactured. The potters carry on their art in charming surroundings, the scene of their labours being a beautiful palm-grove, the trees of which afford them a welcome shade.

The clay used for the pots is obtained in the neighbourhood, and ³¹⁷ is prepared for use by a woman. It is put in a hollow in the ³²³ ground, and a certain amount of finely chopped chaff is mixed with ⁴⁶² it, as well as sufficient water to make it of the proper consistency. One of the women then kneads this preparation with her feet until it is thoroughly mixed.

In this particular locality only women make the hand-made pots, ³²³ and the process is as follows. When the clay is ready for use one ⁴⁶² of the potters forms portions of it into flat, round cakes, from two

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323 to three inches thick. Another woman takes one of these cakes
462 and places it on an upturned pot with rounded base which stands
in a shallow pan filled with chaff. The upturned pot can be
turned round and round in the pan at the will of the potter. The
cake of clay is moulded over the base of the upturned pot, and the
potter pats and smooths it into shape with one hand and with a
potsherd held in the other hand. When this part of the process is
completed she removes the clay, now formed into a hemispherical
shape, and places it on the ground beside her. She goes on dealing



FIG. 60. SMOOTHING OVER THE JOIN IN POT-MAKING

with the cakes of clay in this way until she has a number of such
shapes prepared. She then takes two of these, and bends the edges
of both inward, moistening them, as she does so, with water from
a bowl placed near her. The two shapes are now put together,
rim to rim, the woman again moistening her hand with water to
effect the join, which she first smooths over with her hand and then
with a potsherd or a curved piece of wood¹ (Fig. 60).

The vessel is now a perfect sphere. The opening is cut with
the woman's thumbnail (Fig. 61). She keeps her hand steady
with the thumb in position, and turns the pot round rapidly as it
rests on the ground, or in the pan, thus making a perfectly circular

¹ See below, p. 141, footnote.

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incision. The disk cut in this way is removed, whereupon the woman inserts her hand inside the pot to smooth away the interior ridges formed by the joining of the two hemispheres. A rim is then added round the opening, and small handles are fixed to the sides (Fig. 62). The pots are left to harden in the sun before being fired in the kiln. No slip or glaze is used for decoration.

I found the same technique employed in another village in the same province, the site chosen for the factory being also a palm-grove. Here men as well as women were making the hand-made pots. This is somewhat unusual, as in most parts of the world the men confine themselves to pottery-making with the wheel.

In both these villages men were making pots with wheels on the same site as that occupied by the women, but at a short distance from them.

The clay used for the wheel-turned pots is the same as that used for the hand-made. The circular table on which the clay is placed is rotated by means of a flywheel worked by the potter's foot (cf. Fig. 72). When large vessels, such as *siyār* (singular *sīr*),¹ are to be made the man first moistens the circular table with water,

¹ Very large jars, in which the household water is stored.



FIG. 61. CUTTING THE OPENING WITH THE THUMB NAIL

2: Blackman E-5 (1920-1926) 1927

MR13 Fellahin MR13

Upper Egypt



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FIG. 73. WOMAN PUTTING THE SLIP ON A POT



FIG. 74. POLISHING THE POTS

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larger granaries, which stood on the ground. They, again, were made of sun-baked clay. Many of these must have been from seven to eight or ten feet high.

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Brick-making is also an important industry. The clay is mixed with chopped straw, and is prepared and kneaded as for pottery-

making (see above, pp. 135, 151). So far as I know, men only are employed in this work. The bricks are shaped in a wooden mould with a handle, and are left on the ground to sun-bake (Fig. 81). Most of the houses of the *fellāhin*, and even some of the better-class residences, are built with these crude bricks, though the owners of the latter type of house more usually prefer to use fire-baked bricks.

When the walls are being built each bricklayer is assisted by a fellow-workman, who

stands below and throws up to him one brick at a time (Fig. 82). I have often watched walls being built in this way, and I do not remember ever seeing a bricklayer miss a catch!

I have referred more than once in preceding chapters to fuel manufactured out of cow- or buffalo-dung. This dung is made into round, flat cakes by the women and young girls. Very young children are often to be seen in the villages, their hands and arms plastered with dung, busily engaged in making these cakes, which

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FIG. 81. BRICKS LEFT TO SUN-BAKE: WOODEN MOULD WITH HANDLE IN FOREGROUND

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are left on the ground to dry and harden in the sun. Every housewife is careful to see that she has always a plentiful supply of this fuel, which is neatly stacked in large quantities on the roofs of the houses. 372
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Basket-making is a very large and important industry. Certain kinds of baskets are made in almost every village throughout the country, but a few types are characteristic of certain localities only. Many of the commoner kinds of baskets are strong and well made, but the finest work is to be found in the more southern provinces; indeed, the farther south one goes the better the workmanship. Baskets are made by both men and women, though I have found that in some localities this work tends to



FIG. 82. BUILDING A WALL

be monopolized by one of the sexes only; and one type of basket at least, so I was told, is made only by men. Baskets are constructed mostly out of date-palm leaves and the mid-ribs of palm-branches, but one variety in the south is made from the leaves of *döm*-palms. These particular baskets are easily to be recognized by the shiny surface of the material employed in their manufacture. [462]•

The commonest and one of the most useful baskets in general use is called the *makṭaf* (Fig. 83). It is used in field-work, for the [482]

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482 clearing away of rubbish, for removing *sibākḥ* (the earth obtained from ancient rubbish mounds, used as a fertilizer), and for the transport of grain ; in it, moreover, a woman generally places the dry roots which she collects in the fields to bear home for fuel, and also the goods which she conveys to and from the market. A [482] woman always carries this basket on her head (see p. 80, Fig. 38),

[115]

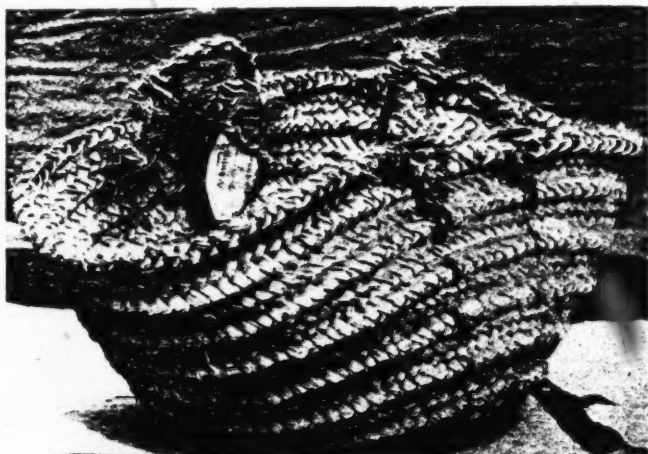


FIG. 83. A MAḤṬAF

the varied contents sometimes including even a small child (see p. 37, Fig. 14).

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462 The habit of carrying their burdens on their heads gives the women their wonderful poise. The heaviest loads are thus carried with apparently the greatest ease. For example, the large water-jars, filled to the brim, are conveyed home in this way by the women without any support from their hands, and without a drop of the contents being spilled (see p. 41, Fig. 16).

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142 Children begin to carry burdens in this way at a very early age, smaller jars, and perhaps somewhat smaller baskets, being used by them. If the heads of the female Egyptian peasants were systematically measured it might be shown that this method of carrying heavy weights from early childhood has made a definite impression on the shape of the skulls, those of the women being possibly much flatter on the top than those of the men. I do not

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same material, any ends that remain over being laced into the sides of the basket below either handle. The base of the basket on the outside is also sometimes reinforced with cord coils.

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I should mention that a basket in my possession, from the oasis of el-Farāfreh, displays the same technique as the *makṭaf*. It is of very fine workmanship and the plaits are very small.

A similar technique is employed in the making of basket-granaries. These are of great size, and are made, so I was told, exclusively by men and, so far as I know, in Fayūm Province only; I have never, as yet, come across them elsewhere. Numbers of them are sold at the weekly markets, and their size may be estimated by comparison with the height of the people standing



FIG. 85. BASKET-GRANARIES

near them in the photograph (Fig. 85). I have frequently seen these basket-granaries on the roofs of houses in Fayūm. Sometimes they are quite globular in shape and are entirely covered with clay, this being done, so one of my servants told me, to keep the wind and dust from penetrating through the interstices. Only when small pieces of clay have fallen off is the original structure of basket-work revealed. All the basket-granaries that I have seen are extremely well made, and are very strong.

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Many baskets in use all over Egypt are made in the follow-

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285 therefore pliable enough to be bent into whatever shape the basket-maker desires.

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441 In one very small village in Fayûm I found a large number of people engaged in this industry. There is also a basket-merchant in this village, and his trade extends all over the country. He informed me that he sent large consignments of baskets abroad, even, he declared, to England, but I am not in a position to be able to verify his statement. I bought a certain number of baskets



FIG. 88. BASKET-MAKERS IN A SMALL VILLAGE IN FAYÛM

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285 from him, including one which, he said, had come from the oasis of Siweh. This basket, the workmanship of which is very superior, is to be seen in the adjacent illustration on the right (Fig. 89).

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415 Baskets of the variety called *kafaş* (plural *akfâş*) (Fig. 90) are used as temporary cages for fowls, pigeons, rabbits, and so on. Oranges and other fruits may also be packed in these baskets, as well as household utensils. In the manufacture of these baskets, which are made of the mid-ribs of palm-branches only, men are more usually employed than women. The baskets can be made very strong, and therefore may be used for carrying heavy weights. Vertical lengths of mid-rib are inserted into holes pierced through horizontal bars of the same material forming the four sides; no

INDUSTRIES AND MARKETS

Spinning is, so far as I have yet observed, more often done by men than by women in Egyptian villages, though I have seen one or two women engaged in this occupation. One year, when visiting a tribe of Arabs, I saw more than one woman spinning yarn.

I have referred in previous chapters to two kinds of bread made by the peasant women. Wheat- and *dura*-flour blended, or the latter ingredient only, are used, mixed of course with yeast, and



FIG. 92. SMALL LOOM FOR ADDING BORDERS TO SILK OR COTTON HANDKERCHIEFS AND THE LIKE

water is added till the dough is of the right consistency. The dough is then put to rise in the sun.

When the round, bun-shaped loaves of bread, called *khubbz*, are made the dough is formed into cakes of the required size, which are then put to rise in the sun before being baked in the oven (Fig. 94). Wheat-flour is the main ingredient of *khubbz*, which is the bread usually eaten by the wealthier peasants.

The making of *battaw* is a more laborious task. When ready for the oven a small dab of fairly moist dough is placed on a large, fan-shaped object made of palm-ribs. The woman then tosses the dough on the fan until it has spread in a thin layer all over it. The 'fan' is then handed to another woman, seated before the mud oven, who slides the flat, round sheet of dough on to the open

THE FELLÄHIN OF UPPER EGYPT

250 oven shelf.¹ A large fire, made of dry *dura*-stalks, is kept burning
 462 in the furnace below the shelf. When one side of the bread is done
 [293] the bakeress turns it over with an iron rod (called *bashkūr*), made
 for this purpose, till the other side is cooked. When quite finished

she removes it with the aid of the *bashkūr* and places it on the ground beside her.

The dough for the *battaw* is usually kneaded in a very large basket, and a great quantity is always made and baked at a time. Thus the task entails many hours of hard labour, and the women often begin the work in the afternoon and continue through the night until daybreak or even later. The baking takes place once or twice a month, and female relatives and friends usually come in to assist. Such bread, if made in a cleanly way, is excellent when fresh. It is



FIG. 93. ARAB WOMAN WEAVING A CARPET

262 crisp and thin, somewhat like the oatcake made in the North
 252 of England and in Scotland. No one who has not made the attempt can realize how difficult it is to toss the dough on the 'fan.' I have myself made one or two efforts to assist in this breadmaking, but I made a hopeless failure of it, much to the amusement of my village friends.

443 Most villages, and all towns, have a weekly market, where a
 [423] great variety of goods are for sale. The market-place is usually situated just outside the village, and is either Government property or belongs to some private individual. Every one who brings

¹ The oven is open in front, but is covered at the top. The smoke goes up through a hole in the ceiling, which opens on to the flat roof.

INDUSTRIES AND MARKETS

Women take their full share in the business of selling, and may be seen squatting on the ground, often accompanied by their male relatives, with their goods spread out before them. The market of cheese and *semn*—the latter clarified butter regularly used in cooking—is conducted solely by the women, so far as I have seen, and they bring these provisions in metal pans carried on their heads.

Large numbers of pottery water-bottles are nearly always to be



FIG. 96. A SHOEMAKER ON THE OUTSKIRTS OF THE MARKET

found for sale at the markets, the better ones being made at Kena, in Southern Egypt, and exported thence far down the Nile.

The tinsmith also does good business, making mugs (*kisān*, singular *kūz*), primitive lamps, and other articles on the spot, using for this purpose old paraffin-oil and petrol tins.

A shoemaker is usually to be seen squatting at work in a spot on the outskirts of the market, with a number of shoes ready for sale on the ground by his side (Fig. 96). He has an iron anvil in front of him, similar to that used by the brass- and copper-smiths, described in the first chapter (p. 32). Near by may be seated sellers of musical instruments, such as the pipe (*nāi*), the *zummāreh*,¹ and the

¹ Double pipe with a drone.

2: Blackman E-5 (1920-1926) 1927

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down round the grinding stones on to the dirty ground it can hardly ²⁵⁶
be called pure or clean! Fortunately there is in most villages at



FIG. 110. WOMAN WINNOWING WITH THE HANDS

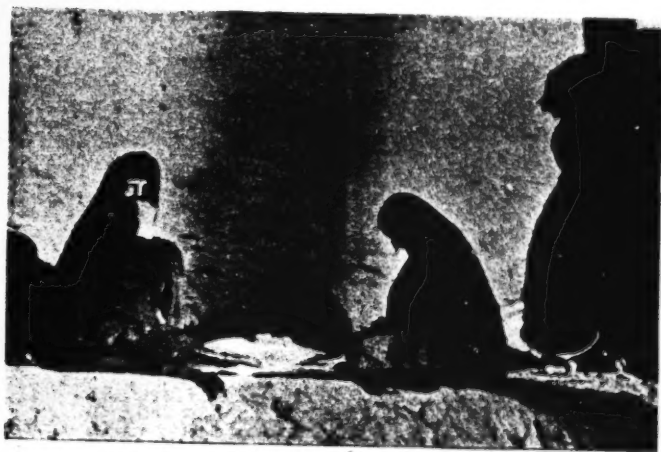


FIG. 111. A HAND-MILL

least one mill worked by steam, and the women take their flour there to be ground for a second time. During this process many of the impurities are removed from the flour.

2: Blackman E-5 (1920-1926) 1927

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Upper Egypt

'AFÄRIT

A few years ago some women in a neighboring village had gone to the Gizeh canal to fill their water-jars. One of them, thinking it would be pleasant to have a bathe, for the weather was very hot, took off her clothes and went right into the water, dancing about with her water-jar on her head. Suddenly she cried out and started wailing, as she felt that she was being drawn under the water. No one made any effort to save her, as they said that an 'afrit of some drowned person had caught her by her hair and was dragging her down. They believed that if one of them attempted to save her he or she would probably be caught also—and, besides, the 'afrit wanted her and must have her!

norag. This is a heavy wooden seat, supported on a rough chassis and moving on three axles armed with eleven solid sharp-edged discs for breaking up the straw. The driver sits in the chair and guides the *gamoossa* round in a circle over the ears so that the discs chop them up, while another worker throws fresh stalks under the machine. The *norag*, which is peculiar to Egypt, costs about L.E. 8. An even simpler variety without the cutting discs averages L.E. 3.

Winnowing is done, as in most Mediterranean countries, by throwing the chaff which contains the corn into the air in the direction of the wind, after it has been trampled and chopped up. For this the fellahs use a two- or four-pronged wooden fork, called a *garuf*. With one *norag* and several *garufs* they can deal with the produce of about 25 feddans.

Last of all the grain is sifted in large sieves by the women and put into sacks, jars or baskets, ready for sale.

D. Berseem

In summer cattle are fed either on chopped straw mixed with beans, or on barley; but in winter they live on *berseem*, an Egyptian species of clover (*trifolium alexandrinum*). *Berseem* is cultivated everywhere and covers a fifth of the total acreage, for it nourishes the ground as well as the cattle by absorbing the nitrogen from the air into the soil. It provides excellent forage, grows quickly and brings good returns for a minimum of work. The fellahs sow it between September and November, often after maize, cotton or rice, and before taking away the old stalks which serve to protect the seedlings. After fifty days or so it is ready for a first cutting, followed by four more at intervals of 35 days; the cattle graze on it as it grows. Two thirds of a feddan will feed a *gamoossa*, or a quarter of a feddan a donkey, for one season.

E. Other Food Crops

There are a number of other foodstuffs which are produced by the fellah's labour from the soil of Egypt. It will suffice to mention the most important.

Rice was brought from India under the Caliphs, and is cultivated in the well-watered regions of Damietta and the Northern Delta.

262 which the fellaheen enjoy immensely. Beans (*fal*) are the
 252 national dish. Then there are little marrows (*kūsa*), and
 finally lentils and rice, which are often mixed, one part to
 two, to make *kushri*. This is their most effective concoction.

262 For dessert, when they have the opportunity, they eat
 264 dates, or bite huge mouthfuls out of slices of water-melon.
 They may also chew sugar cane, or gnaw maize roasted on
 the cob.

Place and season afford a certain variety, but there is
 no wide choice at any one time. The common meal always
 consists of one dish, to which is often added a piece of *mish*,
 a coarse, sour kind of cream cheese, made of goat's or *gamoos-*
sa's milk preserved in salt water, which is eaten from one end
 of Egypt to the other.

[263] For flavouring the fellaheen use crude salt from Damietta,
 and a kind of treacle made by boiling sugar-cane juice.
 They rarely put manufactured salt or sugar in their ordinary
 food. On the occasion of a wedding, circumcision, or *mūlid*,
 they buy plain cakes and red or green sweets, which they
 find as toothsome as their children do.

262 The staple food of the fellah is his maize bread (*bellai*).
 146 This provides 80% of the calories in his diet, and half the
 proteins. A grown man will eat three pounds of it a day.
 It has been calculated that this wholemeal bread contains
 six times more magnesium than normal baker's bread⁽⁴⁾.

252 The grains of maize are not pounded in a mortar, as
 412 millet is by the black peoples of Africa, but ground between
 two millstones, after the manner used throughout the Near
 East.

412 This primitive mill, found also in Morocco, consists of
 462 two large flat stone wheels about two feet wide and three
 252 inches thick. The one on the ground is fixed, while the upper
 one turns on a pivot. It is pierced with a central eyelet,
 into which the grain to be ground is poured. A wooden pin
 set upright in a hole near the edge of the moveable wheel
 serves as a turning handle. This grinding, like the other
 processes of breadmaking, is done by the womenfolk.

252 The flour, with the addition of a little fenugreek (*helba*),
 millet, corn or beans, is kneaded on a piece of wood into
 round, flat cakes, about ten inches across. This dough,
 cooked in the household oven, produces a golden brown
 bread with a very pleasant taste, made of two soft crusts

594 From a fortnight after marriage until her first son is five
 462 years old, the wife helps her husband in the fields, especially
 in the cotton season; but, unlike the Alawite peasant women
 for example, she never tackles heavy work.

462 More often she is busy at home; there is plenty to do,
 562 for she mills and bakes, rears and milks the *gamoossa* and the
 593 goat, looks after the fowls, prepares manure and fuel, sews,
 washes, and delouses herself in public.

She is free to come and go within the limits set by village
 tradition. She is not hidden from the menfolk like towns-
 women or the women of the middle class. She has to carry
 breakfast to her husband out in the fields, then return home
 with the *gamoossa's* dung, and fetch water several times a
 day. She must go to market to sell eggs, butter and poultry,
 and to buy oil and other things. Tradition and necessity
 outweigh the severity of the Koran.

The wife retains ownership of the furniture she brought
 on her wedding-day, and the money for what she sells. In
 this way she can save and even lend to her husband, which
 gives her a certain authority. If he maltreats her, she can
 go back to her father's house and impose her own conditions
 before returning — the gift of a dress, or a pair of ear-rings.
 She is less dependent on her husband than he is on her.

593 A year or two ago, when the men were being levied to
 181 meet the flood danger, I heard a woman weeping. "Don't
 731 take it so much to heart", I said. "They've taken your
 231 husband off, but he'll come back."

"It isn't for my husband I'm crying, but for my lost
gamoossa. Find me my *gamoossa*."

562 The *fellâha* retains her liberty and authority as long as
 577 she is wise enough not to infringe the traditions; for then
 the man gets the upper hand again. She will die rather
 than let herself be examined or treated by a doctor. She
 may go out and gossip with the other women as much as
 she likes, but woe to her if she is found in the company of
 a man, or even alone in some unwonted place. If she goes
 wrong, her husband accuses her to her family. Then her
 684 father, brother, or cousin must kill her. Such *crimes d'hon-*
 577 *neur*, being commended though not established by Islam,
 are still frequent and are treated with indulgence by the courts.
 But the severity of the punishment is out of proportion not
 only to the crime, but also to the woman's education.

75.

A Ready Answer.

^x539
312
● 462
521 In the morning the women and girls come to the river-bank, to draw water with their Balālīṣ (singular ballāṣ), the well-known, and characteristic water-jars. This is always accompanied by much jesting and talking.

Here a young man teases the girls (ll. 1-2) and they give him a ready answer (ll. 3-4).

*Ya banat, yalli betimlu,
kira-l-mōrade kam?
'Ašara min abu ṭā'a
we-bōse min taḥt el-ḥuzām.*

"You girls who are drawing water,
How much is the rent of the watering-place?"
"Ten of 'those with the window'
And a kiss under the nose-ring."

[177]
[436] 3. The peasants call the escutcheon on the back of European coins, a "window". Thus the people distinguish the English sovereigns: "abu-š-šibbāk" = "father of the window" and "abu-l-ḥuṣān" = "father of the horse". The latter are, besides, more popular among the peasants. In our song of course no small coin is meant.

[301]
[264] 4. The nose-ring is usually put through the right side of the nose, and its pendants hang down over the mouth, so that in order to put anything into the mouth, they must be held aside.

97.

Good Friends.

Sāqye (sā'ye) is the name of the contrivance driven by oxen, for raising the water of the river or a well, to the fields. By means of a large, horizontal, wooden cog-wheel and a smaller, perpendicular one, a large wheel is turned round, which revolves on the same axle with the smaller cog-wheel. On this second, large wheel, hangs a long, endless chain of jars, which raise the water from below and pour it into a trench above. (Compare the illustration.) The peculiar groan and creak of the sāqyes belong as much to the landscape of the Nile Valley, as do the melancholy songs of the shādūf-workers.

A youth comes to the sāqye and questions it as to whether the girls of the village have already been there to get water, as they do every morning. The old sāqye understands him and replies: "A pretty girl has been here" and tells how even the ox, inspired, declared: "For such pretty girls as this, I will work forever; as for the old women, let me alone!" To this day I can hear the bantering tone of the, "Dog's son of a steer!" which escaped one boy as another repeated to me this favorite song.

*Ya sā'ye, yammū fāra,
waradet 'alēki-l-'adāra?
Waradet 'alēye ummā mandīl
wil-ka'b sēi el-hiyare.*